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# The Autumn Garden

*By the same Author*

ON VIOL AND FLUTE. 1873

KING ERIK. 1876

NEW POEMS. 1879

FIRDAUSI IN EXILE. 1885

IN RUSSET AND SILVER. 1894

HYPOLYMPIA. 1901



# The Autumn Garden

By  
Edmund Gosse

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To  
James Fitzmaurice-Kelly





# Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Proem	xv
Lyrics in the Mood of Reflection	
The Intellectual Ecstasy	3
A London Fog	5
Sursum	7
The Bust	9
Sir Lamourac	13
A Night in Time of War	15
June	17
Abishag	18
Monad and Multitude	19
The Train of Life	23
At a Casino	24
Joy	26
Dunster Mill	28
May Day	30
A Ballade of the Simple Life	31
The Butchers' Row	33
Rosemary	34
To a Portuguese Measure	36
At Anstey's Cove	37
Disillusion	38
The Violet	39
A Mood in Italy	41
	ix

## Sonnets

	<i>Page</i>
Ships on the Sea	49
R. B.	50
J. A. S.	51
R. L. S.	52
The Votive Tree	53
The Rhododendron	54
The Tyrant Dream	55
Melancholy in a Garden	56
A Parallel	58
Social Revolution	59
Labour and Love	60

## Songs of Roses

Rose Fantasia	63
The Missive	64
The Rose of Sorrow	65
The Shaken Rose	66

## Commemorations and Inscriptions

The Vanishing Boat	69
Aubrey de Vere	72
For a Tomb at Canterbury	74
Dirge for the Funeral of Ruskin	75
Madrigal on the Birthday of Queen Victoria	76
To Henrik Ibsen on entering his seventy-fifth year, March 20, 1902	77
Inscription for a certain Glade in the Isle of Wight	79



## Verses of Occasion

	<i>Page</i>
An Episode in Mountain Manceuvres	83
Poems written in Norway in 1899 :	
I. The Peninsula	85
II. The Cataract	87
III. The Lake	89
IV. Verses written in the Album of Anna Björnaraa	91
A Song for the New Year	92
The Cripples' Guild	94
Omariana	96
Experiments :	
I. Choriambics	98
II. The Bob Wheel	99

## Paraphrases

The Prologue of Arcturus	103
Cornelia apud Inferos	105

## Epilogue in the Autumn Garden

Epilogue	111
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# Proem





## Proem

PALE thoughts, like drops of trembling dew,  
By sunset of my hopes shot through ;  
Faint longings, colourless at noon,  
But turned to beryls in the moon ;

Ecstatic dreams ; obscure desires,  
Lit up by misty opal-fires ;  
Intensest visions, caught between  
The flight of phantoms scarcely seen ;

Within this featureless array  
Of year by year and day by day,  
I fix them, flashing, ere they pass,  
And turn them into gems—or glass !

I string them, be they stone or paste,  
I string them ere they fall to waste,  
And in my fond delusion fling  
The circlet o'er Time's hurrying wing.

Ah ! they may hang a moment there,  
Caught by a feather, high in air,—  
Or they may flit to earth amain  
Dissolved in tears of silver rain.



# Lyrics in the Mood of Reflection



## The Intellectual Ecstasy

"Hinc Stygias ebrius hausit aquas"

DIOGENES LAERTIUS

OF Epicurus it is told  
That growing weak, and faint, and cold,  
And falling towards that torpid state  
By doctors held as desperate,  
He drowned his senses in a flood  
Of th' ancient vine's ebullient blood,  
Ingurgitating draughts of fire  
To lull his fear and his desire.

But was he sober when he died?—  
Where to an epigram replied :  
"He was too mad to taste or care  
How bitter Stygian waters were;  
Blest was he therefore." Can we draw  
A sweetness from this cynic saw,  
Or of this mithridate distil  
An antidote for life's long ill ?

Perchance ! since, as we linger thus,  
'Twixt dawn and dark swung pendulous,  
Supported through our irksome state  
By fond illusions of old date,



The mind within itself retires,  
And there inspects its dead desires—  
A soothsayer, revolving thrice  
Around the ambiguous sacrifice.

In vain we toil to waken flame  
Where once with scarce a breath it came ;  
In vain old auguries invoke  
Of swarming bees and stricken oak ;  
The spirit feels no secret stir  
O' the exquisite remembrancer,  
And into depths, unsealed in vain,  
Drop hollow-sounding tears like rain.

But still, in philosophic sense,  
A purple cluster glows intense,  
And from an intellectual vine  
Rich madness gushes, half divine ;  
Droops the dull vein in chill eclipse ?  
A heavenly beaker slakes our lips,  
And cups of thrilling freshness lend  
Fantastic aid as we descend.

So, drunk with knowledge, only fed  
With rapture from the fountain-head,  
Until the bells of God shall call  
The flush'd, insatiate bacchanal,  
Let her go smiling toward her rest  
On tottering footsteps, faintly blest,  
And, in that fair delirium dight,  
Walk down to darkness in great light.

## A London Fog

IN blue-gray fog, as in the sea, we drown ;  
    The unseen rain soaks down ;  
Like broken phantom pillars, from each roof  
    The chimneys soar aloof.

The sky, lost, like some ocean from below,  
    Melts in one general flow ;  
Vague, dull, immense, splashed with the light of tears,  
    The long dim pavement sheers.

And now, and now, across its sullied glass,  
    The blotted figures pass ;—  
Hope, poverty, ambition, lust, and pain  
    Glide, muffled, thro' the rain.

And she whom most we love, or that fell head  
    Our thoughts hate most, and dread,  
Might cleave the blueness at our cheek, nor make  
    One sentry-nerve awake.

This is an image of indifferent death,  
    That chokes the ardent breath,  
Bids the warm eye be veiled, the heart beat slow,  
    The tide of self slip low ;

And with its universal chill prepares  
This creature of bright airs  
For faint eternal grades of misty blue,  
And mazes without clue.



## Sursum

THE Alpine pasture stirs  
With rattling grasshoppers,  
Some green, some gold, some gray with crimson wings ;  
Antic or grim or fair,  
They glitter everywhere,  
Without a path or aim, brisk foolish blundering things.

On stiff legs issuing forth,  
They fling to greet the North,  
But veer by South in air, and perch by West ;  
Nor o'er those horny eyes  
Floats shadow of surprise  
To find the impelling hope so instantly repressed.

Thus, with no goal or plan,  
The headlong race of man  
Bounds in the void at each uncertain sign,  
Take grass-flowers for the stars,  
Ants' holes for hell's black bars,  
The lustrous eyes of mice for Providence Divine.

Yet, with a knotted scourge,  
The instinctive forces urge  
Their helpless slaves to leap in hollow air ;

No matter what the flight,  
Nor where the feet alight,  
To leap and pause and leap is all our human care.

Nor at this fate would I,  
Shrill insect, wail and cry,  
Demand a goal, and shake the stems with rage,  
Claim that our fretful race  
Should know their hour and place,  
Should whirr with faultless aim across their grassy stage.

Rather for spurs that prick  
My dulness to the quick,  
Whither I know not, forcing upward flight—  
For blind desires to rise  
Toward blank phantasmal skies,  
To vault in fruitless curve beneath a larger light,—

For instincts vague and wide—  
So humbling to my pride—  
I thank the Will I own not, yet adore ;  
Content to leap astray,  
Content to lose my way,  
While still I hold in joy the mastering wish to soar.

## The Bust

*My daughters, on my birthday-dawn,  
Deep midst our London garden-trees,  
Set up the image of a Faun,  
All garlanded and tricked to please.*

Against the door's dark cinnabar  
The white bust twinkles, like a star,  
High on its slender pedestal :  
The heavy chestnuts, green and brown,  
Throw verdurous lights and shadows down,  
While birds about it flit and fall.  
The serpent-locks bear stain on stain  
From loose crushed leaf and sudden storm ;  
Within the laughing eyes, the rain  
Has channelled out the dainty form.

In Greece 'twas marble long ago,  
Pentelican, as pure as snow  
And crystalline as mountain frost,  
But here, in London, sculpture's breath  
Pants to a plaster-cloudy death,  
Till all the lovelier gleam is lost.

Yet fondly, from my trellised bower,  
I gaze, this magic twilight hour,  
    Upon the Faun that smiles, and smiles,  
    And mystifies, and still beguiles.

His curling lips are reft apart  
    With folds of that grimacing stain  
Which now exaggerates the art  
    That modelled, with a drift of rain ;  
I see him as he lived in Greece ;  
I see the pipes, the humble fleece,  
    The fillet and the bunch of nuts,  
The little gifts which shepherds laid  
Upon the wild thyme in the glade  
    That sloped down softly towards their huts ;  
Ambiguous apparition, made  
To tell their terror and their trade !

O Faun, within the folding night  
Thou fadest to a star of white ;  
Thy lidded eyes, thy serpent-hair,  
    Thy twisted throat of mystery,  
Thy narrow brows unscored by care,  
    I still divine, yet hardly see.  
Instead of purple Attic wine,  
    Satyric ghost, I pour to thee  
Pure water, flung out far and fine,  
In drops that pierce the night, and shine.  
    O Faun, be bountiful to me !



O bless my hearth and home, as when,  
    Outspeeded by the Maenades,  
Thou paused'st near the haunts of men,  
    To bless the fishers of the seas ;  
Or leaning to the reddened rocks  
To watch the fleecy, loitering flocks  
    Of shepherds in the darkling glen ;  
Or bending with illusive smile  
To see the rustic troop defile,  
    And lights spring out at eve as now ;  
Then on thy goat-feet sped'st amain  
To join the timbrel-whirling train  
    Of nymphs upon the mountain's brow.

O bless my empty ears with song,  
    Since thou hast flung from laughing lips  
The reedy pipes that did them wrong,  
    That thy mouth's music might eclipse  
All pastoral fluting ! In this heart,—  
    This old, weak, weary heart of mine,—  
An ancient spirit stands apart  
    And listens for a sound from thine.  
Sing, Faun, of all the opening world,  
So delicate, so dewy-pearled,  
    That budded round thy daring eyes,  
When first amid the strain and stir  
Of many a fragrant, whispering fir  
    Thou gazed'st with a babe's surprise,  
And from thy russet-needed bed,  
    Down the long avenue of pines,

Saw'st the slow sunrise ridge with red  
The dim white Ocean's long-drawn lines.

O speak, eternal lips of youth,  
Some word to age that flags so fast !  
Hast thou no tenderness, no ruth  
For wingèd years that flutter past ?  
Immortal Faun, tho' cold thou art,  
In thy unaltered smile I read  
A presage to my smouldering heart  
That can but leap to thee, and bleed.  
O guide it through this darker day,  
When all has sunk to cloud and clay,  
When even thine own immortal form  
Has lost the marble of its birth,  
And shadows of the final storm  
Close over this dejected earth !

O lift me, cold sardonic Bust,  
Above the silence and the dust ;  
Teach me thine old, sublime, severe  
Philosophy of light and love,  
Bid me be calm, as leaves are green,  
And humble, as the stars above.

*Stars ? They are salt around my head,  
And brushed by leaves like quivering hands.  
The ancient goatherd, that was dead,  
Lives, and condones, and understands.*

## Sir Lamourac

THE day was curs'd, the day was black,  
When that bright knight, Sir Lamourac,  
Brought Mark the fatal faery horn  
Which proved Sir Tristram's faith forsworn ;  
When, to the chapel near the sea,  
Sir Tristram, bound at wrist and knee,  
Was roughly haled by forty knights :  
This was the end of love's delights,  
And all the sorrows of the world  
From that dark trumpet were unfurled.  
No more the happy sparkling wold  
Would gleam at daybreak like wet gold ;  
No more the wave of fishes break  
In silver on the low moon's wake ;  
No more the slim brown nightingale,  
Against the twilight primrose-pale,  
Make Tristram's heart leap hard with bliss.  
The beauty of the world must miss  
Some glamour of the soul of a boy,  
Some rapture of unbidden joy ;  
And it was Lamourac,—and not  
Another with blind passion hot,—

The pure cold spirit of Lamourac,  
For ever strained upon the rack  
And stabbed by pangs of knightliness,  
That did this deed of cruel stress.

Ah ! life is thrif with paths like these,  
That lead to sorrow and to disease  
From spirit-heights of lifted bliss !  
The lover to the loved it is  
Who serves the bitter bowl of hate ;  
The cheerful hand is the hand of fate.  
An innocent child will spread the gin,  
A priest in prayer lead straight to sin ;  
The climber, blind in her own hair,  
The pitiful missioner of despair,  
The wind that bloweth the smoking flax,—  
To Tristrams all are Lamouracs.



## A Night in Time of War

THE clouds are up, to sweep and tune  
That inharmonious harp, the moon ;  
The north wind blows a harsh bassoon.

An old astrologer might say,  
By signs, by portents whirled this way,  
That earth was nearing her decay.

All apprehensions stir to-night  
With fluttering issues infinite,  
Conjunction, phantom, famine, blight ;

The woodland shakes its agèd bones  
And shrieks ; beyond, in deeper tones  
The ceremonial cypress groans ;

And I, the microcosm of all,  
Quake, shuddering, underneath the pall  
Of nature's hurrying funeral.

Yes ! though my sceptic brain rejects  
My sires' chain'd causes and effects,  
The nerves retain their deep defects ;

And still my heart leaps in my side,—  
A fluctuant ark upon its tide,—  
With throbs and throes unsanctified,

And knows not how to brave the stir  
Of sounds that beckon and shout to her  
Of sins that clouds and winds aver.

I dare not sleep to-night, for dread  
Of spectral lights obscurely shed  
About my plum'd and shadowy bed.

Faint, faint, these mildew'd chords that twang  
So feebly, where the music rang  
Deep organ-notes when Homer sang !

Ah ! strange to find the quivering crests  
Of long-laid faiths, forgotten guests,  
Rise up at memory's dim behests !

Ah ! strange to feel the soul resume  
Its cast-off heritage of gloom,—  
The savage turning in his tomb !

## June

AH ! why my heart is beating is more than I can tell,  
At the hawthorn-bloom like incense in the air,  
And the cuckoo in the woodland that is calling like a bell,  
Like a cracked bell calling me to prayer ;

But I think the ringing cuckoo, with its hard hysteric cry,  
Is youth in the spring-movement of the blood,  
And the richness of the blossom a reminder we must die,  
While life is tasting exquisitely good.

Ah ! the falling of the petals in the shivering silver night !  
Ah ! the turning wheel of years that will not stay !  
I'd relinquish all the chances of to-morrows bold and bright  
For one clutch at the delirium of to-day.

## Abishag

O LITTLE tender rose of Bethlehem,  
Lo ! I am harsher than the salt sea-shore,  
And purblind, like some beggar of the plain,  
With knotted hair, and beard that hath not known  
The comb's caress for wandering wasted years.

I know thy fingers are too fresh and cool  
To lie within my gnarled and leathern hands ;  
I know thy kiss drops on my mouth like dew  
On dust, or like those petals of the peach  
Starring the ruined road to Olivet.

But I have left the pilgrims in the path  
To wrangle round their creeds with shaken staves,  
And I have left the thought that I am old,  
For, gazing in the pools of thy dark eyes,  
The mirrored portrait of myself seems young.

## Monad and Multitude

DEEP in high woods, where none pass by,  
Strange fancies haunt the ear and eye,  
And human forms are inly seen  
Where human foot hath seldom been :  
So, to my restless thought to-day,  
Grows populous the woodland gray—  
Young, stalwart, silent warriors these  
Battalions of beleaguering trees ;  
Each living bole, awakened, lifts  
Toward golden cloud and azure rifts  
Slim, slippery limbs, but lately curl'd  
In coverts of the savage world,  
Each naked, with its silver guard,  
Soft skin, and muscle folded hard.

So dreamed I, with that army round  
Of forms alert, and—ne'er a sound.

Then as I lay across the bed  
Of cold moss temper'd to my head,  
I sang : " O million shafts of pines,  
On each of whom the god-light shines,  
In you the miracle I see



Of multitude in unity.  
Each silken pillar stands alone ;  
From root to quivering twig 'tis one ;  
Its body drawn from earth's gray lap,  
Its branches fed with gem-like sap ;  
Through dreamy frosts, submerged in snow,  
Which spreads a twilight here below,—  
Through summer opened fanlike out,  
By flame of spice made smooth and stout,—  
Each watched and fed and bound and guarded  
As if alone of all regarded,  
Yet standing in this forest fast  
An atom in the tree-world vast,  
One of a million—swarms that are  
Mere velvet from the vale afar,  
Uncounted items covering wide  
The old heroic mountain-side,  
Mere units from whose sacrifice  
Broad complicated forests rise.”

So, in the mystic world of man,  
We see the endless double plan—  
The single spirit, for whose boon  
Alone God lighted sun and moon,  
You, or you other soul, or I,  
The central wonder of the sky,  
A solitary force that came  
From heaven, and holds the heavenly flame ;  
Whose life alone contains the fears  
And joys of time's unending years ;  
Fixed goal round which for ever stirs

The ministering universe,  
Whose mighty sinew, whose clear nerve,  
Whose pulse and satin skin, deserve  
The best that eons can supply  
Of vivid immortality.

So, gaze at the sufficing pine  
For one view of your being, and mine !  
But, in another view, how slight  
Your hold and mine on love and light !

Items we are, of no account,  
As pushing toward the sun we mount,  
And 'tis but in our own conceit  
We feign a godhead round our feet.  
Since,—this one stunted, that one tall,  
And boughs here mildewed, fit to fall,  
This soiled from owls' nests, this one clean,  
With shimmering fans of stainless green—  
We are but parts of one design,  
Monotonous and unbenign.

Last night along this huge expanse  
I saw a crookèd lightning dance ;  
The thunder roared in hollow fit,  
And all the forest moaned with it.  
If from the vault in darkness steeped  
A shaft of angry lightning leaped,  
And tipped one pine in elfin mirth,  
And scored and blasted it to earth,

Fed on its spices, burned within,  
And shrivelled up its satin skin,  
Where is that stricken pine to-day,  
In all the forests' plumed array ?

What tho' the single life be broken,  
The broad, sweet woodland gives no token ;  
Its oneness left no wounded sense  
On the undisturbed circumference,  
Nor can the eye, though searching well,  
Deplore that vanished miracle.

Such is the wonder of man's soul,  
God-guarded, an essential whole ;  
Yet, in life's broad and mighty scheme,  
God-unregarded, and a dream.

## The Train of Life

WE traced the bleak ridge, to and fro,  
Grave forty, gay fourteen ;  
While yellow larks, in heaven's blue glow,  
Like laughing stars were seen,  
And rose-tipp'd larches, fringed below,  
Shone fabulously green.

And as I watched my restless son  
Leap over gorse and briar,  
And felt his golden nature run  
With April sap and fire,  
Methought another madpate spun  
Beside another sire.

Sudden, the thirty years slip by,  
Shot like a curtain's rings !  
My father treads the ridge, and I  
The boy that leaps and flings,  
While eyes that in the churchyard lie  
Seem smiling tenderest things.

## At a Casino

THE night was scented like a peach,  
The balustrade was cold to touch ;  
The words that linked us, each to each,  
Expressed too little,—or too much !  
The music sobbed beneath the trees  
That soared into a purple sky ;  
On nights so delicate as these  
We dare not dream that we must die.

The breeze came scented o'er the vines  
Down limestone mountains ghostly pale ;  
What boundless hopes the heart confines !  
And hopes should never faint nor fail.  
The plaintive string, the wailing brass  
Struck up a livelier note of glee ;  
But moods, like clouds at midnight, pass—  
And who so sorrowful as we ?

The laurels flashed their silver tongues  
Within the perfumed moonlit night ;  
Our pulses overflowed with songs  
Of life's ineffable delight,—



Then ebb'd with fear of growing old,  
With nameless dread, with shadowy care ;  
The balustrade was marble-cold,  
And like a peach the wandering air.

## Joy

I HAVE seen, I too, the April face of joy,  
The pale wet blue, the flying yellow cloud ;  
I have felt the wind across the mountain-side,  
Cold after hail, and in the primrose dell  
The sunlight warmer than a mother's hands.

O to embrace the trembling lips of joy !  
O to catch sight, deep in the shivering grass,  
Of golden, snow-white, lilac blooms of Spring,  
Ghosts from the underworld miraculous,  
Saints rearisen from sordid clods of sin.

But what is joy, and what are flowers and clouds,  
And what the diapason of the birds,  
And what the holiness and bliss of thought,  
Unless another shares them ? Magic gold  
That fades while greedy fingers clutch at it.

Pure would I be, and yet not cold nor thin,  
Uplifted in the dream of lovely life  
Renascent, yet nor arrogant nor dense,  
But like a mirror to reflect the sky  
On pensive hearts shut up in silentness.

Ah ! how to flash the marvel back on these !  
Ah ! how to carry in my shining eyes  
The April azure, in my tingling hands  
The new-born sun-warmth, how to pour them forth  
Into cold breasts that languish in the gloom ?

Since, while the glory floods me, it is gone !  
Gray grow the skies, doleful the dripping boughs ;  
My eyes and hands are empty as before ;  
Of all the promised benefactions, hope  
And memory, faded memory, sole survive.

Ah ! seize the rapturous moment, bind the charm !  
Let love run faster than the halcyon gleam  
That sanctified these waters and this glade !  
Let me be fleet in tenderness, and swift  
In kindest answer to the impulse given.

So, and not otherwise, the blue may shine  
In mortal eyes, while all the heavens grow dull ;  
So, and not otherwise, the breath of balm  
Be wafted thro' the dolorous hurricane,  
And joy persist through all vicissitude.

## Dunster Mill

HERE would I live, and watch the light  
Ebb down my level lawns at night,  
While Avill with his whispering stream  
Should mould the music of my dream ;  
My poplars old should flutter high  
Their fairy hands against the sky,  
And all the hollow twilight stir  
With laughter of the woodpecker.  
The hunt should, each a scarlet spark,  
Press homeward down the dark-green park,  
Yet scarcely wind the horn, or be  
Disturbers of my privacy ;  
Nor from the hollyhocks should scare  
One mimic huntsman of the air.  
All sounds and scents, all shadowy lights,  
That life revolves in careful rites,  
Should, on this rustic altar piled,  
Beguile me as they once beguiled.  
The silvery otter then might spy  
My limbs reclined, nor think to fly ;  
The ousel preen her dazzling breast,  
And lead me to her sunken nest ;

The wild hind pierce my noontide lair,  
Nor start to find a harbourer there ;  
The heavy-lidded owlet hoot  
Her welcome from the pear-tree shoot :  
All Nature graciously contend  
To claim me for a harmless friend.

Ah ! dream enwrapped in wreathèd mist,  
Come ! fold me in thine amethyst ;  
Divide from all the jarring years  
This heart that hopes and craves and fears ;  
Still let me live, still take from thee  
Thy gifts of stream and poplar-tree.



## May Day

EACH month of May  
The gardens have their way,  
Suffusing pale pure light  
Thro' foliage clean and bright,  
Till suns destroy  
The soft enigma of their emerald joy.

Their innocence,  
Their paradisal sense,—  
As of broad fans outspread  
Over an angel's head  
To hide the blue,  
And catch the gliding constellated dew,—

Each year repeats.  
Each year, with magic feats,  
Renews the miracle  
Of growth and hue and smell,  
And, full in sight,  
The verdant metamorphosis of light.

## A Ballade of the Simple Life

ACROSS the blushing willow-weed in spires  
Of fulgent crimson barred with opal grains,  
Lit by the ardent sunset's liquid fires  
While life seemed mantling in his rosy veins—  
The life of life that waxes not nor wanes,—  
*Courage* came first, a javelin in his hand ;  
The light within his bold black eyes was fanned  
By high disdain and ignorance of shame ;  
And like a bastion then I saw him stand,  
A wholesome wood-boy with his cheeks on flame.

Then, swiftly, thro' a noise of leaves like lyres,  
Unclouded by the weary fret that stains  
Our jaded limbs ; clean from all sick desires ;  
Bright as the tossing eglantine that chains  
With fairy pink the odorous winding lanes,  
*Joy* leapt to sight ; his russet brow was tanned,  
Where curls were clustered round, a laughing band ;  
Beating a lifted tambourine he came,  
And flung it flaring upward like a brand,—  
A wholesome wood-boy with his cheeks on flame.

Then fell there silence on the adoring choirs  
Of birds that celebrate their wedded pains ;

The brushwood backward waved the elastic wires  
With which its matted undergrowth restrains  
The striving foot which little purchase gains,—  
And *Pity* glided towards me. Soft as sand  
The fading twilight smouldered in the bland  
Loose clusters of his hair. I read his name  
By sudden shining tears, through which I scanned  
The wholesome wood-boy with his cheeks on flame.

*Envoi.*

PRINCE, in the purer empire of our sires,  
Threefold the Power that purchased health and fame!  
Now the loose web of useless effort tires  
Our foolish heart that in a coil expires;  
O to regain that age when, void of blame,  
*Courage* and *Joy* and *Pity* were our squires,—  
Three wholesome wood-boys with their cheeks on flame.

## The Butchers' Row

THEY wandered down the Butchers' Row  
In old Limoges the fair ;  
His love was dressed as white as snow  
Under her ruddy hair ;  
It fared to be St. Maura's fête,  
And all the bells rang out,  
And through the ruinous English gate  
There streamed the merry rout.

The butchers' shops were black as night,  
The flags were blue and red ;  
His love walked on in laughing white,  
Merry the word she said ;  
And down the Row to the river-shore  
She passed, so pure and gay,  
The people took her for Ste. Maure,  
And crossed themselves to pray.

## Rosemary

GREEN bud-stars spangle  
The dead, black tree ;  
Bloom's in a tangle  
On holt and lea :  
Now elm-boughs shade me,  
Now birds have sung,  
O heart, persuade me  
I still am young !

Ah, no ; heart, hush thee !  
Be wise, serene,  
Lest snow-wreaths crush thee  
Ere Hallowe'en ;  
Though June be jolly,  
Though flowers be sweet,  
'Tis naught but folly,  
And fond deceit.

Heart, thou hast finished  
With joys that fade ;  
Thy strength diminished,  
Thy light decayed !



The brain is an ember ;  
The blood is cold—  
O heart, remember  
We both are old !

## To a Portuguese Measure

If all the stars that glitter  
In heaven's high cope, should topple from their places,—  
If all the fruits turned bitter  
That soothe us with suave graces,  
If all young girls bore sad and shrunken faces ;

If shivering months should bind us  
In chains of darkness, forged of frozen Summer,  
With dull dead Spring behind us,  
And Autumn growing dumber,  
And ice within the beard of each new-comer ;

Yet Memory the Beguiler  
Would tune her rapid notes in brisk division,  
And Fancy, roseate Smiler,  
Would build up dreams elysian,  
And warm the heart of man with joyful vision.

## At Anstey's Cove

THE breeze inscribes with ring on ring  
The grizzled oily seas of Spring ;  
Around the headland, gray and pale,  
Comes, like a ghost, a gliding sail.

Through brooding tides I see her come  
Where once I rowed, where once I swum ;  
Ah ! then that weltering water's hue  
Was rainbow-purple, peacock-blue.

She veers and fades ; she dies away  
In gulfs of universal gray ;  
And of my boyhood and its boast  
She seems the melancholy ghost.

## Disillusion

IN the mirk that circles us  
    Starry clear thy image stood,  
Like the gold ranunculus  
    On the black pools in the wood.

While its pure refulgence shone,  
    Even despair grew thin and bright,  
As behind the burning sun  
    Darkest ether melts to white.

Now that image quits the sky,  
    Plunges like a falling star,  
Slips, out of the pride on high,  
    Down, down where the pities are.

What an empty world for me !  
    What a night without a sound !  
Suddenly eternity  
    With its blackness folds me round.

## The Violet

BESIDE the dusty road of life,  
Deflowered with toil and foul with strife,  
Lie hid within a charm of dew  
Pure harbours made for me and you.

In such a shadowy nook is set  
Rest's purple-wingèd violet ;  
It nods upon the fitful breeze  
Born in the fount's interstices ;—

That fount of joy for travellers made,  
Ensconced within a dappled shade,  
Where still its wings our violet lifts  
Beneath the pulsing air that shifts ;—

The little fount that bubbles there  
Under a veil of maiden-hair,  
And coils through many a liquid fold  
Its crystal waters dusk and cold.

So small the fount, a hidden thing,—  
So weak the violet's throbbing wing,—  
The haughty world in dust rides by,  
Without a thought, without a sigh.



Loud, in a riot of speed and glare,  
About their noisy work men fare ;  
With shriek of engine, yell of horn,  
They glorify a world new-born.

We love the old, the timid ways,  
The loose bough shutting out the blaze,  
The murmur of an ancient rhyme,  
Heard faintly in the ear of Time.

And spirits, here and there, who still  
Prefer the mill-stream to the mill,  
To riot, quiet, and to speed  
The dance of rooted water-weed,

Across a rood or two of grass,  
Unseen, into our realm will pass,  
Will lean above the whispering spring,  
And hear the hidden runnel sing.

And then the crimson cheek will choose  
The rainbow of the pulsing dew ;  
Then silence calm the 'wilder'd brain,  
And life grow sanctified again.

## A Mood in Italy

UNDER the fluted  
Velvet datura's  
Trumpets of perfume  
    Virginal white,  
Long I waited,  
Leaning my elbows  
Hard on the marble  
    Over the lake,  
Dreamily questioning  
What was the mystery,  
What was the secret  
    Issue of life ?  
Years pass over us,  
Years glide by with us,—  
Years like the sandalo  
    Scoring the blue ;  
Faint white wake of it,  
Noiseless oars of it,  
Woundless waters  
    Melting behind.  
What is the worth of it ?  
What the meaning ?  
What the issue  
    When life is done ?

So, for ages,  
The world has questioned,  
So the philosopher,  
    So the saint ;  
Bells from the bell-tower  
Pink through the chestnuts,  
Song from the orchard,  
    Prayer from the shrine.  
Priest and peasant,  
Lover and martyr,  
Monk in his rock-cell,  
    King on his throne,  
Ever repeating,  
Ever resuming,  
Ever comparing,  
    But all—in vain !  
The sandal passes ;  
Their rich September  
Fainting in perfume,—  
    Their withering March,—  
If it bless them or ban them,  
Ripen or rot them,  
Leaves them silent  
    Without reply.

Frail and hurrying  
Child of darkness,  
Spun for a moment  
    In sparkling blue,  
With night behind me,  
And night before me,

And blind as the sage is,  
    And dark as the fool,—  
Can I,—presuming,  
Where all before me  
Have failed, have fall'n  
    By Sphinx devour'd,—  
Can I in this moment  
Garner a harvest  
Where no man hath gathered  
    One sheaf from time ?  
Vain is the effort !  
Better in silence  
Breathe the datura's  
    Ineffable breath,—  
Take, in patience,  
The delicate pleasure  
That flowers and waters  
    And clouds procure.

Nay, but a glimmer,  
Faint as a sparkle  
Caught from the mirror  
    Of wind-touch'd wave,  
Flashes within me,  
Wakens a feeling  
Scarce articulate,  
    Finer than thought ;  
Hints that the secret  
Pulses of being  
Aim at no wonder  
    Beyond themselves ;

That light and odour,  
Stillness and movement,  
The bell that summons,  
    But not the prayer,  
Hope in its progress,  
But not fruition,  
The oar that impels us,  
    But not the port,—  
Life in living,  
The urgent instinct,—  
These are the intimate  
    Issues of life !

Give me the wisdom  
To glide, and gliding  
Take the happiness,  
    Take the pain ;  
Know myself to be  
Less than a petal  
Floating in fragrance  
    Down to the lake.  
Weakness of mortals !  
Impotent butterflies  
Beat their tremulous  
    Radiant vans,  
Dream of morrows  
Beyond to-morrow,  
Probe for honey  
    In honey-less blooms.  
Moment by moment  
Ah ! to be telling



Ever the pulses  
    Of perilous time ;  
This is your answer,  
Martyr and lover,  
This is the guerdon  
    This the crown !



## Sonnets



## **Ships on the Sea**

**FAR** down the dim horizon of my soul  
    White are the sails of friends beloved and lost ;  
    Great ships that in mid-sea my pinnacle crost,  
That hailed it cheerly o'er the long waves' roll.

All, all have reached their harbour and their goal ;  
    I still ride out the storm-wind and the frost ;  
    By futile hopes and wavering passions tost,  
I miss their broader sway and strong control.

But not in vain beneath their lofty shade  
    I danced awhile, frail plaything of the seas ;  
    Unfit to brave the ampler main with these ;  
Yet, by the instinct which their souls obeyed,  
Less stedfast, o'er the trackless wave I strayed,  
    And follow still their vanishing trestle-trees.



R. B.

His soul went singing like a mountaineer  
Who climbs the hills, and carols as he climbs ;  
Above the snows he heard the faëry chimes  
Of God's faint bells, and felt no shade of fear.

He leaped in faith from year to glimmering year ;  
Nothing to him seemed poor or vile or vain,  
Since all the fibres of his heart and brain  
Were braced by hope's high alpine atmosphere.

I have known no goodlier spirit ! Where he walked,  
Love masqueraded in rough skins and claws,  
Feigning to be some monster of the woods ;

Loud was the voice wherewith he rhymed and talked,  
But warmer heart, or moved in kindlier cause,  
Was never stirred by man's vicissitudes.

J. A. S.

THOU, who, in thine own bitter words, did'st keep  
A burning heart amid the eternal snows,—  
Say, whether in the garth of death there grows  
A herb to staunch thy grief and yield thee sleep.

Breathe gentlier, gentlier there ! oh slumber deep !  
No more the fangs of fruitless longing close  
Fast in that flesh from which the life-blood flows,  
Back from that brow the clouds of torture sweep.

Beyond the lot of man thou sufferedst pain ;  
But thy great spirit, through the winnowing fire,  
Like noblest metal from a raging pyre,

Ran, liquid light, a stream of sparkling rain,  
Indomitably daring, gold of brain  
Fused from the ore of torments gross and dire.

R. L. S.

REST, oh thou restless angel, rest at last,  
    High on thy mountain peak that caps the waves ;  
    Anguish no more thy delicate soul enslaves,  
Dream-clouds no more thy slumber overcast.

Adventurous angel, fold thy wings ! the vast  
    Pacific forest, with its architraves,  
    The stillness of its long liana'd naves,  
Involves thee in a silence of times past.

Thou whom we loved, a child of sportive whim,  
    So fair to play with, comfort, thrill or chide,  
    Art grown as ancient as thine island gods,

As mystic as the menacing seraphim,  
    As grim as priests upon a red hill-side,  
    Or lictors shouldering high their sheaves of rods.

## The Votive Tree

SPRAWLED on the harsh sea-sand, Lentinus found  
A rough wild olive, on whose branches grew  
Strange foliage—wind-dried garments not a few,  
Festoons of seaweed, battered medals bound

Like fruits, and tinkling with a shaken sound,—  
Things ragged, mean, deplorable to view ;  
But he was moved and gladdened, for he knew  
The pious token and the prayer profound.

These were the gifts of sailors, who had felt  
Death, in a dream, like cold wind thro' their hair,  
And, wakening, found the horror ebbed away ;

So that beneath that tree Lentinus knelt,  
As at a chapel entered unaware,  
And blessed the gods whom storms and seas obey.

## The Rhododendron

Love clasps his arms around the awakening bride,  
Till from the sullen foliage of her heart  
Passion and thought and hope impulsive start :  
So April, down this rolling garden-side,

Wakes blossom on the rhododendron's crest,—  
Volcanic crimson from a burning world,  
Fire, buried and lost, in maiden foliage furled,  
Now blazoned to the waters and the West.

For, all the smouldering embers of her soul  
Lay hidden in glossy darkness with no sign,  
Till Love, onrushing like a storm unseal'd,

Scatter'd the bud-sheaths, and the glowing coal,  
In flames like petals, with a scent of wine,  
Leapt furious, and the Woman smiled, reveal'd.

MOUNTSTEWART, *April* 14, 1906.



## The Tyrant Dream

THIS living world seems dazed and submarine,  
Drenched in the lunar splendour of the night,  
And, like owls' golden eyes, are sparkling bright  
Stars thro' the beechen boughs that intervene ;

And down this vitreous wilderness of green  
Thy pale fantastic shade, O false delight,  
Importunately challenges the flight  
Of feebler fancies, cool and mild and mean.

Dream, I forbade thy presence here with me !  
Hot shade, I drave thee from my paradise !  
Delight, thou shouldst enslave my heart no more !

But, in this glassy night of reverie,  
Thou hast rent the daylight artifice of lies !  
Tyrannic dream, entrance me as before.

## Melancholy in the Garden

### I

THE winds that dash these August dahlias down,  
And chase the streams of light across the grass,  
This solemn watery air, like clouded glass,  
This perfume on the terrace bare and brown,

Are like the soundless flush of full renown  
That gathers with the gathering years that pass,  
And weaves for happy, glorious life, alas !  
Of sorrow and of solitude a crown.

I know not what this load is on my heart,  
But in these alleys I have loved so long,  
Filled from old years with retrospect and song,

I wander aimless, ready to depart,  
Prepared to welcome, with no frightened start,  
The fatal spectre and the shrouded throng.

II

“Nature hath spent at last her shining store,  
And I have lived my day,” the painter said,  
Who felt the arrowy throe, the dizzied head,  
And laid his palette down for evermore.

Well had he learned the melancholy lore  
That trains the rose, without a murmur made,  
To break the clusters of her royal red,  
And strew her beauty on the windy shore.

Some warning, surely, must I read to-night,  
In flower and tree, in flying light and cloud ;  
It is the voice of Death, not near, nor loud,

But whispering from some cypress out of sight,  
That bids me hearken for the feathery flight,  
And draw my robes across my shoulders bowed.

## A Parallel

To R. R.

O'ER many a wish frustrated, purpose foiled,  
Still dost thou weep, discouraged Soul of Man ?  
Be comforted, since even Nature can  
Too rarely triumph fully where she toiled ;

Behold the tree, the flower, the cloud despoiled  
Of beauty, which was virtue in her plan ;  
A thousand times her purposes out-ran  
Their issues, maimed and crippled, bent and soiled.

If many evenings close in faintest gray  
Before one glorious sunset crowns the day,  
If, for one oak, a myriad acorns rot,

If Nature fails a thousand times ere one  
Clear master-stroke of beauty fronts the sun,  
Man's frequent frailty may deject him not.

## Social Revolution

To A. C. B.

HEROIC counsel shook our hearts to-day,  
Where new-mown grass perfumed your hedgerow-dell ;  
Blue lights across your mangold-wurzel fell,  
And Ely shone, a phantom far away.

We spoke of coming claims for social sway,  
Of rising horde and shattered citadel,  
And one thought all things surely must be well,  
And one had little faith, and murmured " Nay ! "

Then, in the primrose sunset of July,  
Homeward along the Hinton fields we came,  
And each to other questioning made reply

That man and God and nation were the same,  
When fen-pools mirrored that far minster-flame,—  
And would be, while men toil beneath the sky.



## Labour and Love

To M. B.

LABOUR and love ! there are no other laws  
To rule the liberal action of that soul  
Which faith hath set beneath thy brief control,  
Or lull the empty fear that racks and gnaws ;

Labour ! then, like a rising moon, the cause  
Of life shall light thine hour from pole to pole ;  
Thou shalt taste health of purpose, and the roll  
Of simple joys unwind without a pause.

Love ! and thy heart shall cease to question why  
Its beating pulse was set to rock and rave ;  
Find but another heart this side the grave

To soothe and cling to,—thou hast life's reply.  
Labour and love ! then fade without a sigh,  
Submerged beneath the inexorable wave.

# Songs of Roses



## Rose Fantasia

ROSE, that flushing hues did'st borrow  
    From my lute,  
Pink for joy and pale for sorrow,—  
    Now 'tis mute,  
Droop thine amber lids, and sleep  
In a tide of perfume deep,  
Till the sap of music creep  
    To thy root.

Dream; then die the death of roses  
    With no pain,  
Till the yellowing wreck uncloses  
    In the rain,  
And the ghost of music springs  
On its dim gray moth-like wings  
To my lute's neglected strings  
    Once again.

## The Missive

I THAT tumble at your feet  
    Am a rose ;  
Nothing dewier or more sweet  
    Buds or blows.  
He that plucked me, he that threw me  
Breathed in fire his whole soul through me.

How the cold air is infused  
    With the scent !  
See, this satin leaf is bruised,—  
    Bruised and bent.  
Lift me, lift the wounded blossom,  
Soothe it at your rosier bosom !

Frown not with averted eyes !  
    Joy's a flower,  
That is born a god, and dies  
    In an hour.  
Take me, for the summer closes,  
And your life is but a rose's.

## The Rose of Sorrow

THE royal rose our sovereign bard bewitches ;  
Three roses crown his lyre ;  
The red is Conquest ; and the yellow, Riches ;  
The damask rose, Desire.

But o'er the airs with which his strings are ringing,  
One rose hangs out of sight ;  
Of the white rose he never dreams of singing,—  
For sorrow's rose is white.



## The Fallen Rose

LIFE, like an overweighted shaken rose,  
Falls, in a cloud of colour, to my feet ;  
Its petals strew my first November snows,  
Too soon, too fleet !

'Twas my own breath had blown the leaves apart,  
My own hot eyelids stirred them where they lay ;  
It was the tumult of my own bright heart  
Broke them away.

# Commemorations and Inscriptions



## The Vanishing Boat

H. S.

He is dying,—

He is dying in England in the clammy heat,  
And, in the quiet room where he is lying,  
The coverlet is white from head to feet,  
Like this white fjord beneath this milky sky.  
I sit, and almost see him die.

Here where the tender evening breeze is sighing  
Along the beech-wood coverts, sigh on sigh,  
Where all the lingering airs are cool and sweet  
With woodruff and the soft, crush'd juniper,  
And scarce a bough can stir,  
It is so still here in the fading day ;  
And there, in England, miles and miles away,  
He is dying.

All messages come slowly  
To this pure haunt of sylvan loneliness ;  
Perchance even now he hath put off the stress  
Of life, and its extremest weariness,  
For rest more calm and holy.  
I know not if the face I seem to see  
Upon the long white visionary bed

Be living still, or hath been sometime dead ;  
For it is shrouded wholly,  
As by the mist that lifts from off the sea,  
As by the wood-smoke drifting in the wood.  
I know not if I greet my friend  
Still here, but sinking to an end ;  
Or gaze across the interlude  
Of a cold beginning mystery ;  
Or see before me lying stiff and frore  
The statue that is he no more.

Howe'er it be, farewell !  
Farewell, from shining fjord and pine-clad fell,  
From odorous brae and unfamiliar shore,—  
Now I shall see that sacred face no more ;  
No more from those mild and transfigured eyes  
See flash the gracious miracle  
Of sympathetic thoughts and sage replies,—  
Those eyes that were the store  
Of kindness unreproug, keen and wise.  
Farewell, farewell !  
The darkness gathers round me in the bell  
Of cowslip-coloured air ;  
And the long coast beyond grows pale and faint.  
A little vanishing boat returning thither  
Sends silver streamers in her wake,  
Altho' her oars scarce break  
The lucent mirror of the lake.  
She passes into silence and dim light,  
She fades into the cowslip-coloured night,—  
She passes,—whither ?

I know not. But I know  
From me the silent occupant must go ;  
Whatever message to this shore he brought,  
Whatever comforting of heart's annoy,  
Whatever cargo of clear thought,  
Whatever freight of hope and joy,—  
His hour is over and his mission done.  
Thanks for the long day's happy work he wrought,  
Thanks for his cheerful toil beneath the sun,  
Thanks for the victories he won.  
Now, late at evening, with a silver thread  
Of loving memories in his wake, he goes.  
Perchance the distance brings him what he sought,  
Perchance the further shore, where he is fled,  
Is mirage to the dead.  
Who knows, who knows?

To all at length an end !  
All sailors to some unseen harbour float.  
Farewell, mysterious, happy, twilight boat.  
Farewell, my friend !

MUNKEBJERG, JUTLAND,  
*August 1900.*



Aubrey de Vere

1814-1902.

IN the far romantic morning, when the bards in golden  
 Ringed with dew and light and music, struck their giant  
 Came a child and stood beside them, gazed adoring in  
 Hushed his little heart in worship of a race so calm and

They are gone, those gods and giants, caught Elijah-like to  
glory,  
Now their triumphs and their sorrows are a part of  
England's story ;  
Years and years ago they vanished ; but the child who  
loved them well,  
Still has held the ear of mortals with a far-off tale to tell.

Theirs were voices heard like harps above the congregated  
thunder ;  
His, a trembling hymn to beauty, or a breath of whispered  
wonder ;

When the world's tongue spoke, he faltered ; but above  
the turmoil rolled  
Fragments of romantic rapture, echoes of the age of gold.

Others stun the years to homage with their novelty and  
splendour ;  
He was shy and backward-gazing, but his noiseless soul  
was tender.  
When he sang, the birds sang louder, for his accents, low  
and clear,  
Never hushed a mourning cushat, never scared a sunning  
deer.

Now the last of all who communed with the mighty bards  
has perished ;  
He is part of that eternity he prophesied and cherished ;  
Now the child, the whisperer passes now extremity of age  
Shuts the pure memorial volume, turns the long and stain-  
less page.

Where some westward-hurrying river to the bright  
Atlantic dashes,  
In some faint enchanted Celtic woodland hide this poet's  
ashes,  
That the souls of those old singers whom the clans of song  
hold dear,  
Nightly may return to hover o'er the grave of their  
De Vere.

## For a Tomb at Canterbury

E. W. B., October 11, 1896

No pain that mars the trembling brow,  
    No flutterings of the soul were his ;  
Death, shaken softly from its bough,  
    Dropt downward, and its touch a kiss.

Clasped in a cloud of secret prayer,  
    Faint, from the upland path he trod,  
Sighing, he sank through veils of air,—  
    Then round him felt the Arms of God.

## Dirge

John Ruskin, January 1900.

MOURN, upward-stealing vapours, sunset-amber,  
Cirrus and cumulus of fire and snow !  
No more against the labouring west-wind clamber,  
But pour your tears upon the mead below,  
Since he who shepherded your cohort slow,  
Who named and loved and watched you, one by one,  
Goes darkly down to that immortal chamber,  
Whence he shall never see you blot the sun,  
Nor chase and toss the dancing stars on high,  
Nor weave your tender woof, when day is done,  
Over the silken sky.

Mourn, mourn, ye Alps, whose crystal paradises  
Know neither space nor time, save when and where  
The avalanche from desperate precipices  
Tolls a rude thundering hour through shuddering air,  
He who amongst you walked, and named you fair,  
And traced each delicate hornèd crest with joy,  
And justified your savage sacrifices,  
Him shall no more your azure glens decoy ;  
Far from your silver light, your starry gust,  
Him to eternal stillness tears convoy,  
To silence and to dust.

## Madrigal on the Birthday of Queen Victoria

LADY on the silver throne,  
Like the moon thou art to me,  
Something bright, august and lone,  
Infinite in majesty.  
How can I, a pilgrim, sing  
Such a dazzling, distant thing ?

But the Moon came down to earth,  
Wiping tears from human eyes ;  
Thou dost bend to grief and mirth,  
Woman in thy smiles and sighs ;  
Empress, take the human praise  
That a subject dares not raise.

To Henrik Ibsen on entering his  
Seventy-fifth Year, March 20, 1902

RED Star, that on the forehead of the North  
Hast flared so high and with so fierce a blaze,  
Thy long vermilion light still issues forth  
Through night of fir-woods down the water-ways,  
In urgent wrath of sinister wild rays ;  
Lower it falls, and nearer to the sea,—  
But still the dark horizon flames with thee.

All stars and suns roll their predestined course,  
Invade the zenith, poise, then downward turn ;  
Thrust onward by some godlike secret force,  
They sparkle, flush, and, e'er they fade, they burn,  
Each quenched at last in its historic urn ;  
Each sloping to its cold material grave ;  
Yet each remembered by the light it gave.

Thy radiance, angry Star, shall fill the sky,  
When all thy mortal being hath decayed ;  
Thine is a splendour never doomed to die,  
Long clouded by man's vapours, long delayed,  
But risen at last above all envious shade :



Amid the pearly throng of lyric stars,  
Thy fighting orb has stormed the sky like Mars.

And when the slow revolving years have driven  
All softer fire below the western wave,  
Though strange new planets crowd our startled heaven,  
The soul will still bear on its architrave  
The light, reflected, that thy lustre gave.  
Hail, burning Star ! A dazzled Magian, I  
Kneel to thy red refulgence till I die.

## Inscription for a certain Glade in the Isle of Wight

HERE the earliest whitethroat sings,  
Fern-owls weave their noiseless rings,  
Here the light is always pure,  
And the fragrant hours endure ;  
Here the wind-flowers waken soon,  
Here the month is always June,—  
For a foot was here at night,  
And an eye that swam in light,  
When the fitful moonbeam shone  
On the tears of Tennyson.



# Verses of Occasion

*“Gelegenheitsgedichte—die erste und  
ächtteste aller Dichtarten.”*

GOETHE: *Dichtung und Wahrheit*



## An Episode in Mountain Manœuvres

FAR down the glacier-streams, by pathways made for mules,  
The mountain-troops have come, and crowd our café-stools,  
Their elbows brush the board, and in the evening breeze  
Their long moustaches wave, their hands rest on their knees.  
Weary and soiled they come, from marching, days on days,  
Up torrents choked with thorns, down rattling pebbly ways ;  
Patient and brown they sit, blue-clad, with white-webb'd feet,  
Like carrier-pigeons perched, half-dozing in the heat,  
They seem to bear the hue of gentians in their eyes.

The old gray town has scarce awaked from its surprise  
At this pacific inroad from the virgin-snows.  
Scented and deep the twilight wind that gently blows  
From vines engendering slow the tender wine begun ;  
From beds of matted thyme and mint-weed hot i' the sun ;  
From vaguely perfumed places rising far to south.

The children lounge from school, with peaches at their  
And watch the soldiers playing tric-trac in the shade,  
Or march with mimic drum and clarion un-afraid,





## Poems written in Norway in 1899

### I. The Peninsula

THE lilac ling my bed, I lay  
In that entranced half-isle of ours,—  
That Sirmio of a northern bay,  
Paven with tiny leaves and flowers ;—  
Ancestral birches down the blue  
Their waterfalls of silver threw.

Between their gnarl'd and papery boughs  
The radiant lake burned in the sun ;  
I looked out of their fairy house,  
And watched the waves break one by one—  
Reverberant turquoise shattered there  
Between green earth and golden air.

Hot in the breeze, the distant pines  
Cast wafts of spice across our shore ;  
And unseen rosemaries gave signs,  
And secret junipers their store ;  
From every flower and herb and tree  
Sabæan odours sighed to me.

And all things sang, too,—the soft wind,  
The birch-leaves' petulant, shy sound,  
The lapping waters, and the thinned  
Sleek tufts of autumn leafage browned,  
The cow-bell far away, that fills  
All corners of the folded hills.

Thus odour, song, and colour wrought  
A magic raiment for my soul :  
All the dark garments pain had brought  
To robe me for the masque of dole  
Fell from me straightway ; I was clad  
As angels when God makes them glad.

Blue, golden-green, and silver-white—  
Were these not hues for happiness ?  
In our elysian island bright,  
Round the worn pilgrim still they press ;  
They dress him for the world anew,  
These spirits of white and green and blue.

And so for hours I laid my head  
Upon the lilac spires of ling,  
And thus, by Beauty islanded,  
I heard the lustral waters sing,  
And watched the low wind stir the gold  
And turn the quavering birch-leaves cold.

NÆSET I BYGLAND,  
*August 4.*

## II. The Cataract

FROM slippery slab to slab I crawl  
Above the shattering waterfall.

A mist, like hopeless human prayer,  
Curls in the firs and welters there.

Through them I watch descend, descend  
The shuddering waters without end.

Gray tears have fallen to swell this flood,  
And iron-ruddy drops like blood.

It moans, and sobs, and howls, and sings,  
And whispers of heart-breaking things.

For ages it has thundered so  
Into the slate-blue lake below.

Each streak of blood, each cold gray tear,  
Sinks down into the sullen mere.

Sinks down, and vanishes, and dies,  
Yet the lake's borders never rise.

So to God's silent heart are hurled  
The sorrows of the unsuccoured world.

TINNFOSEN,  
*August 19.*

### III. The Lake

NEVERMORE sail or oar  
Hears the chorus that once bore us  
    To the shore,  
Where the birches shake their tresses  
From the outmost sandy nesses.

Fare ye well, brae and dell,  
And our meadow, deep in shadow !  
    Never tell  
How we loved your pleasant reaches  
And the shade of your sleek beeches.

Hours and hours, sun and showers,  
Quiet-breasted, here we rested  
    By your flowers.  
Flowers will fade and life is tragic ;  
Keep, sweet lake, your breathless magic.

To your shore nevermore  
Come we sailing, blithely hailing,  
    As of yore ;  
To return would break asunder  
All the threads we wove in wonder.



Then, adieu ! not of you  
Shall a broken heart be token,  
Wavelets blue !  
We must steer our barque of sorrow  
To some darker shore to-morrow.

BYGLANDSFJORDEN,  
*August 15.*

## IV. Verses

Written in the album of Anna Björnaraa, the composer and singer of Stev, where many Norwegian and Danish poets had written.

HERE, where below the bastion of the hills  
Immortal song still gushes like a fountain,  
And with its delicate enchantment fills  
The granite goblet of the hollow mountain,  
I come, the pilgrim of an alien clime,  
And croon a stave with these my Northland brothers,  
Since more than blood-kin is the bond of rhyme,  
And sisters were our ancient Muses' mothers.

VIK I VALLE, SÆTERSDALEN,  
*August 8.*

## A Song for the New Year

WHAT graven words shall mark as mine  
This milestone of a year ?

What prayer shall be the worthy sign  
Of all I hope and fear ?

Not greed for gold—

I'm growing old ;

Burdens I dare no more uphold ;

Nor deem I meet for weary feet

The dust and struggle of the street.

Then shall I wish for utter peace ?

For light with calm around ?

For all the stir of life to cease

In apathy profound ?

Ah ! no, too long

I've warred with wrong ;

I've loved the clash of battle-song ;

For me, to drone in ease alone

Were heavier than a church-yard stone.

And fame ? Alas ! it comes too late,

Or, coming, flies too soon ;

It dawns, as o'er the meadow-gate,

Peers up the yellow moon ;

It glows in power  
One feverish hour,  
Then passes like a perish'd flower ;  
Or sets, to rise in alien skies,  
And cheat me of my lawful prize.

Why, then, my New Year's wish shall be  
For love, and love alone ;  
More hands to hold out joy to me,  
More hearts for me to own ;  
And if the gain  
In part be pain,—  
Since time but gives to take again,—  
~~Yet~~ Yet more than gold a thousand-fold  
Is love that's neither bought nor sold.

## The Cripples' Guild

To M. S.

WHERE no light of summer shone  
By the streams of Babylon,  
There they sate and wept alone ;

Sobbing in the squalid shade  
O'er the ruin life had made,  
Sobbing, utterly dismayed ;

Listening to the wind that saith,  
Piping with its hollow breath,  
“ Who may loose this body of death ? ”

Then within that shrouded sky  
Love's clear crystal flashed on high ;  
Voices rang, “ Ye shall not die ! ”

Hope, by morning breezes fanned,  
Waved the clarion in her hand,  
Blew evangel through the land ;

Melted with her smile the snows ;  
Clothed the desert with the rose ;  
Brimmed the stream that fuller flows ;

Dried the tears that dropped like rain  
On pale folded hands in vain ;  
Soothed the wild heart's fluttering pain ;

Gave the untended fingers will  
For the work that combats ill ;  
Proved the useless useful still.

And the life that was so dark  
Wins a rapture now, and, hark !  
Carols like the soaring lark !

Colour wakens in the grass,  
And the river shines like glass,  
While the moods of languor pass,

Till the world that sobbed for grief,  
Till the thin hours, bald and brief,  
Smile in joy beyond belief.



## Omariana

### I

ONE cup of joy before the banquet ends !  
One thought for vanish'd, for transfigur'd friends,  
    Stars on the living cope of heaven emboss'd,—  
The heaven of love which o'er us beams and bends.

Roses and bay for many a phantom head !  
Death is but what we make it—for the dead ;  
    Held fast in memory, those we've loved and lost  
Shall live while blood is warm and wine is red.

*July 1895.*

WHILE *Zál* and *Rustum* drew their thunderous line  
 Across the rolling veldts that shift and shine,  
     Or marching down the long sun-bitten road  
 Went wheeling round Rhinocerosfontejn,

We, laagered safe from all our shadowy foes,  
 Performed our rites and waved the double rose,  
     Feasted in innocently Persian mode,  
 And told the Master—what the Master knows.

In peace we drank : yet never might forget  
 With what rare wine the wilderness was wet,  
     What vintage, pour'd for us, the withering grass  
 Held to our glory and eternal debt.

Nor will forget ! Yet are we folk of peace ;  
 We long to hear the ringing warfare cease ;  
     Then o'er our feast a purpler flush will pass  
 When *Zál* comes home with *Rustum* from the seas.

*April 1900.*

## Experiments

### I. Choriambics

To the late J. B. L.-W.

WARREN, waken to verse ! chant to us some new song !  
Greece, Rome call not in vain, heroes of old, and gods ;  
    Egypt, rending her veil, cries  
    “ See where laughter has reigned, and tears ! ”

Chant thou, till, in our hearts, veiled by the sands of time,  
Sorrow, beauty and love, stirred by the antique shell  
    More than mortally stricken,  
    Echo, e'en as tho' Pindar sang.

1878.

## II. The Bob-Wheel

To the late W. C. M.

A BOB-WHÉEL MONKHOUSE bids me try,  
Ten rhymes on two, besides the " bob " !  
I hesitate, and start, and sigh :  
The fear of failure makes me throb.  
Can such a breathless bard as I  
On these frail pinions heavenward fly ?  
Some dædal wizard let me rob !  
Courage ! the rhymes are gliding by ;  
'Tis almost done ! See, knob by knob,  
The bob-wheel turns !  
Put something, Cosmo, in my fob,—  
His wage the poet earns.

1880.



# Paraphrases





## The Prologue of Arcturus

Imitated from the "Rudens" of Plautus

BEHOLD me, of the race that rules the sky !  
Not Jupiter a verier God than I ;  
A sparkling star, compact of dew and flame,  
I roll, and from the Bear I take my name.  
High overhead, a god, I blaze all night—  
But spend with mortal men the hours of light.  
In this I emulate an endless line  
Of deities, immortal and divine ;  
Since Jove himself paternally decrees  
That Gods should wander over lands and seas,  
Should put Man's worship to a private test,  
And each investigate what each knows best.

Some rogues, litigious without right or cause,  
Suborn false witnesses, defy the laws,  
Declare themselves in court, devoid of shame,  
Brazen ; but back to Heaven we bear each name.  
From us the Father learns who weeps for rage,  
Powerless to grasp the ravished heritage ;  
Who, crushed and shattered by a lying oath,  
Curses the lawyer, or the law, or both.

Back to his house he creeps, and little dreams  
Of Jove's deep knowledge of these desperate schemes.

But still the guilty wonders, twice or thrice  
Earning no boon from costly sacrifice ;  
With clamorous hymns and fat of many a bull,  
Men call Jove just and wise and bountiful,  
With no suspicion that from me he wins  
An open knowledge of their secret sins ;  
For, taught by us, the Father from the sky  
Lest drop no blessing upon perjury.

If ye are humble, poor and weak, but true,  
Honour and happiness shall rain on you,  
But lies and shameful greed, though loud in prayer,  
Shall find no echo in the empty air.

We watch you still ; unseen, in street and mart,  
We watch you, and we know you, pure in heart.  
Stars all night long, at dawn we fade away,  
And put on manhood, and are yours all day ;  
But of these god-stars gliding from the sky,  
Most wild and most tempestuous star am I ;  
Wild am I when I rise, but when I set  
More turbulent and more tempestuous yet.

Now listen, for of elfin storms we sing,  
Of waves that on the rocks their burdens fling,  
Of homes unroofed, of ships that strike and sink,  
Of maidens maddening on death's icy brink,  
A father to his child restored at last,  
And, on the shores of Love, a lover cast.

These things regard ; and with your hands applaud  
Invincible Arcturus, foe to fraud.

## Cornelia apud Inferos

Paraphrased out of Propertius

CEASE, Paulus, cease to drench my tomb with tears ;  
Deaf to your woe the ebon gates of Hell !  
When death engulfs our tender mortal years,  
Behind a wall of adamant we dwell.  
Ev'n if a god could hear your cries and moans,  
Deep is the stream, and dark, without a ford ;  
Beneath the sky there yet is hope ; but groans  
The buried to the living ne'er restored.  
The funeral trumpet sealed my fate for aye,  
The crawling flame condemned my shrunken dust ;  
O what is wedlock, Paulus, what the cry  
Of charioteers, the pride of badge or bust ?  
For all her fame, her happiness, her race,  
Cornelia now lies lighter than a cloud.  
O cursèd Night, my marshy resting-place,  
O winding waters and my liquid shroud !  
  
Too early, yet all innocent, I come ;  
Father of shades, be clement to my shade.  
May Æacus, my judge, be mild and dumb,  
And due indulgence for my years be made.  
O brethren of his dreadful house, be kind !  
O hearken for my doom, each griesly Fate !

O pause, Ixion ! Sisyphus, be blind !  
O grasp thy river, Tantalus, and wait !  
Be merciful, rude Cerberus, to-day,  
And drop the rusty links of thy loose chain.  
I for myself will plead my cause ; and may  
The fell urn overwhelm me, if I plead in vain.

If noble parentage might e'er avail,  
My father's names should consecrate my race ;  
My mother's ancestry no less prevail ;  
Both strains of blood were blazoned in my face.  
When from my brows the virgin mantle fell,  
My tresses bore the fillet of a bride,  
And, for a moment, dear, I pleased thee well ;  
My tomb declares I had no love beside.  
Ye ancestors, who in your Roman yoke  
Dragged Africa in bondage to your knee,  
And thou who in the flush of conquest broke  
The pride of Perseus, answer then for me.  
The censors blamed me not for light attire ;  
Never I made your reverend shades to blush.  
Cornelia flung no cinders on your fire ;  
She added to your flame a nobler flush.  
Changeless and innocent, my years out-roll ;  
This way or that no fault with me was found ;  
My virtues were the mirror of my soul,  
And not by custom in a circle bound.  
Whatever fate or fame may urge of me,  
No matron shrank to seat her at my side,  
Not even that rarest maid of Cybele,  
Claudia, whom chastity hath deified ;

106



Nor she, the guardian-priest of Vesta's flame,  
Who saw her veil blaze on the living coal ;  
And thou, Scribonia, from whose race I came,  
Only by dying have I grieved thy soul.

A mother's tears, a country's sorrow, these  
Have been my glory ; Cæsar deigns to mourn ;  
A sister's daughter in my shade he sees,  
And weeps my ashes, tho' a God, forlorn.

Yet have I known love's full beatitude ;  
Fate hath not torn me from a barren bed ;  
O Lepidus, O Paulus, tender brood,  
From your warm arms, I, lingering, turned and fled.

Twice have I seen high on the curule chair  
My brother, consul at the hour I died.  
Daughter, be worthy of the name you bear ;  
Be my ensample at your father's side.  
Live as I lived. But, as for me, adieu !  
To quit a life so drear, I grow resigned.  
The loftiest tribute that is woman's due  
Is to be lauded for a virtuous mind.

Dearest, to thee our children I commend ;  
Up through the dark this plaintive prayer I fling !  
Father, a mother's blessing I shall send,  
When round thy neck their little fingers cling.

Our kisses on their lips shall be combined ;  
But though thy heart be breaking, none the less,  
Dry those sad eyes, and let our children find  
No salt upon the smiling mouth they press.



Paulus, tired nights are long enough for tears,  
And lonely dreams will draw us face to face ;  
Then when my breaking voice thy fancy hears,  
Speak, speak ! I shall be present in that place.

But ah ! if other nuptials bid rejoice,  
If some fresh wife approach with cautious smile,  
Children, approve your father's second choice,  
And with caresses that new face beguile ;  
Nor over-loudly praise your Mother dead,  
Lest in such open speech ye seem to blame.  
But if long woe circles your Father's head,  
And consecrates the memory of my name,  
Then from to-day look forward to long years,  
Soothed by your love through all their vain despair ;  
The gods above, in pity of my tears,  
Grant you long life to be your Father's care.  
Happy I was in death, and void of fears,  
With all my lov'd ones clustered round me there.

My cause is ended. Rise, my weeping friends ;  
Bid my pure soul fulfil the gods' behest ;  
Heav'n opens for me ; and my shade ascends  
To join the solemn cohorts of the blest.

# Epilogue in the Autumn Garden



## Epilogue

BEFORE my tale of days is told,  
O may I watch, on reverent knees,  
The unknown Beauty once unfold  
The magic of her mysteries !

Before I die, O may I see,  
Clasp'd in her violet girdle, Spring ;  
May April breezes blow to me  
Songs that the youngest poets sing !

Old eyes are dull to sights unseen,  
Old ears are dull to songs unsung,  
But if the heart stay warm and green,  
Perchance the senses may keep young.

Howe'er it be, I will not quail  
To tell the lapse of years like sand ;  
My faith in beauty shall not fail  
Because I fail to understand.

New arts, new raptures, new desires  
Will stir the new-born souls of men ;  
New fingers smite new-fashioned lyres,—  
And O ! may I be listening then.

The centaur crashes thro' the woods,  
And shoots his arrow there and thus :  
Shall I prefer the solitudes  
Because his form be fabulous ?

Shall I reject the green and rose  
Of opals, with their shifting flame,  
Because the classic diamond glows  
With lustre that is still the same ?

Change is the pulse of life on earth,  
The artist dies, but Art lives on ;  
New rhapsodies are ripe for birth  
When every rhapsodist seems gone.

So, if I pray for length of days,  
It is not in the barren pride  
That looks behind itself, and says  
“ The Past alone is deified ! ”

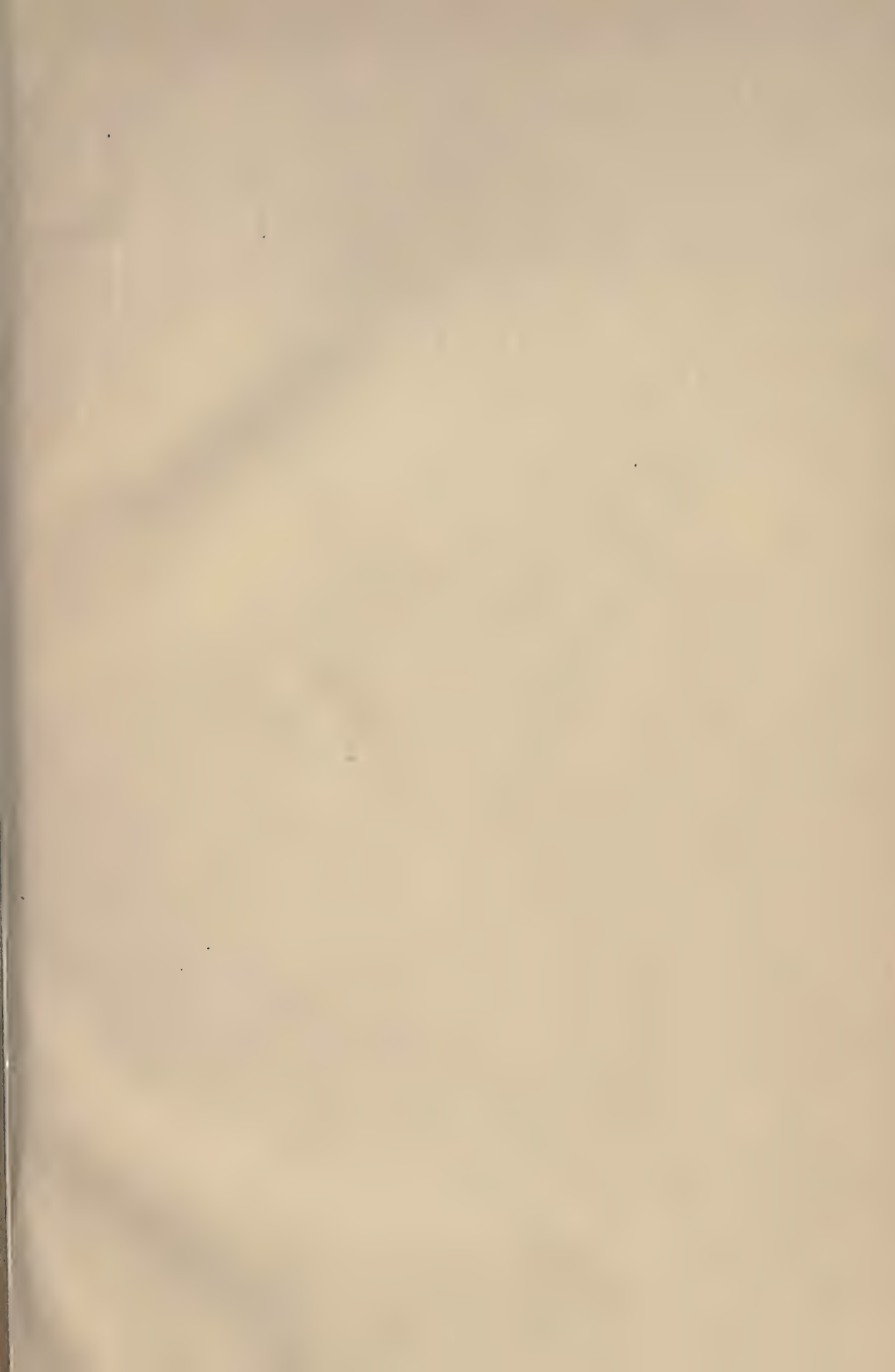
Nay, humbly, shrinkingly, in dread  
Of fires too splendid to be borne,—  
In expectation lest my head  
Be from its Orphic shoulders torn,—

I wait, till, down the eastern sky  
Muses, like Maenads in a throng,  
Sweep my decayed traditions by,  
In startling tones of unknown song.

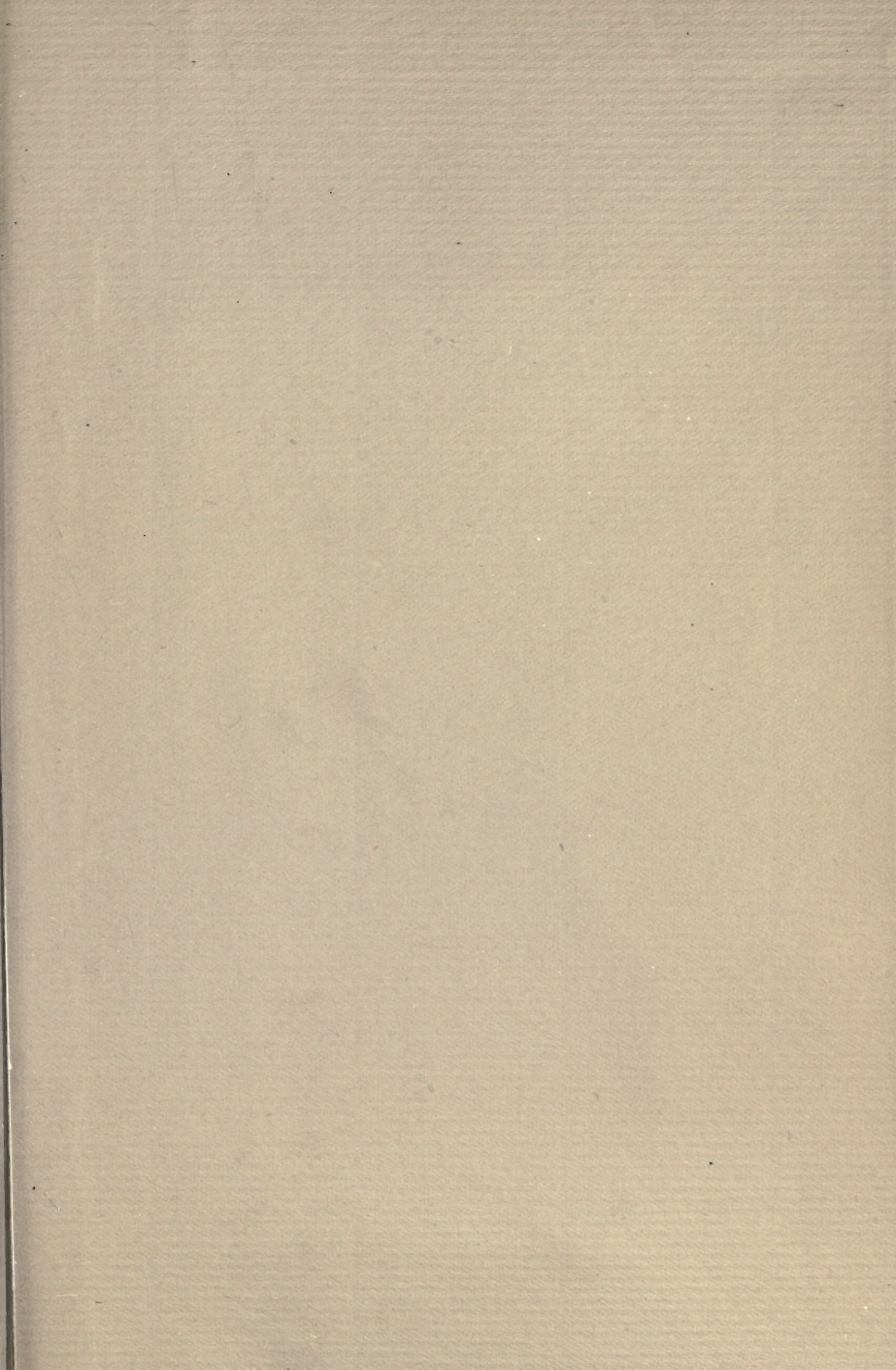
So, to my days' extremity,  
May I, in patience infinite,  
Attend the beauty that must be,  
And, though it slay me, welcome it.















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Gosse, (Sir) Edmund William  
The autumn garden

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